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APOLLONIUS OF TYANA.

APOLLONIUS OF TYANA,

THE

PAGAN CHRIST

OF THE THIRD CENTURY.

AN ESSAY

BY

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DEDICATED,

IN REMEMBRANCE OF AN OLD FRIENDSHIP,

TO THE

WRITER OF THE ESSAY,

BY

THE TRANSLATOR.

This is "quite a misrepresentation of the subject." see Mead's Apollonius of Tyana p 51.

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APOLLONIUS OF TYANA,

THE

PAGAN CHRIST

OF THE THIRD CENTURY.

APOLLONIUS OF TYANA AND THE IMPERIAL COURT OF SEVERUS AND HIS SUCCESSORS.

THE acknowledged triumph of Christianity during the reign of Constantine has always been considered one of those unaccountable revolutions and one of those historical surprises which, unconnected as they seem to be with any phenomena of the past, might almost be deemed miraculous. One longs to find out by what process the human mind passed so rapidly from a contemptuous and utter denial of the teachings of Christianity to an interest in and an avowed sympathy for the doctrines of the new creed. It has long been thought that this problem

could not be solved; and yet, in point of fact, in this as in many other cases, the transition was caused by no sudden shock, and modern critics have discovered a series of what we may call middle terms which will henceforth tell very materially upon the history of the progress of religious thought in the world.

It was in the fourth century, immediately after the most violent persecutions, that Christianity, though embraced and professed by the minority only, succeeded in attaining to a commanding position in matters both social and political. During the third century, however, an attentive observer might have foreseen the dawn of this unexpected triumph from certain internal convulsions which were then affecting Paganism. An extraordinary change had taken place in the ideas of the Pagan world. People were very far from avowing themselves openly as Christians, and yet they were making decided efforts to Christianise the old creed, that of natural religion. An anxiety was evinced that this old creed should be imbued with more spiritualism, that it should become more

moral, and, moreover, that it should be purified from all traditional absurdities and impurities. And, further, it was believed that the religious ideal which had been dreamt of could only be realised in an incarnation, in a perfectly holy and perfectly beautiful human life, which should enable that ideal to lay hold upon the consciences of men; hence various means were devised to furnish reformed Paganism with a like gift to the one enjoyed by the Christians, through the Gospel, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In a word, an attempt was made to introduce a Pagan Christ. The absurdity, we might almost say, the childish simplicity of these attempts must not blind us to their importance and to their historical value. There is a certain mixture of grandeur of conception and pettiness of realisation which constitutes the very moral essence of this remarkable era, in which the old religion, foreseeing its imminent decline, conceived the idea of prolonging its days by the adoption of those outward trappings and outward forms which belonged properly to its younger rival.

I.

THE biography of Apollonius of Tyana, written by Philostratus of Lemnos, is one of the most curious results of this attempt to remodel and revive Paganism. Philostratus was one of the many men of letters and science who had collected together round Julia Domna, the wife of Septimius Severus. The influence which Julia Domna exercised over the reign of her husband (A.D. 193—211), and more especially over that of his successor Caracalla, who died A.D. 217, is an acknowledged fact in history. It was in obedience to the express desire of his illustrious patroness that Philostratus wrote the biography of the learned Apollonius of Tyana, who lived, it was said, in the days of the first emperors, from Augustus to Domitian; in other words, during the whole of the first century. Other writers, as, for instance, Maximus of Egae and Maeragenes, had already touched upon the same subject. According to his own statement, Philostratus had made free use of a number of unpublished anecdotes, which had

been compiled by a faithful disciple and constant companion of Apollonius, and were known by a title equivalent to our term "Scraps." It would appear, further, that these early works were so notoriously imperfect, that a complete revisal of this strange history had become desirable.

The work of Philostratus is not only interesting in itself, and more amusing, if I might be allowed to say so, than many modern novels, but it is one of the most instructive books we possess. It throws considerable light upon the manners, ideas, and creeds of the period. We are enabled by its aid to understand more of the moral aspect of times which it is almost impossible to realise when studied by the light of Roman history. It admits us at once into the religious atmosphere which would of necessity influence the sympathies of Pagan thinkers. On all these grounds it richly deserves the high rank assigned to it by modern criticism, amongst the many documents which relate to the third century. Its interesting character will be more easily understood if we bear in mind the source from which it sprang. History

has failed to notice the powerful influence of a priestly family composed entirely of women during its most flourishing days, and which, so long as the dynasty of Severus lasted, did imperceptibly, yet most really and powerfully, turn the tide of events and direct the current of thought in the Roman empire. By the expression "dynasty of Severus" I understand the reigns of the four emperors, beginning with Septimius Severus (A.D. 193), and ending with Alexander Severus, who died A.D. 235.

Septimius Severus ascended the throne during one of those critical revolutionary periods when it was doubtful whether the gigantic piece of state machinery founded by Julius Caesar and Augustus was not crumbling to pieces and doomed to be split up into five or six different kingdoms. On the death of Nero a similar shock had been experienced; Vindex, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius had succeeded each other with alarming rapidity. Fortunately for the stability of the empire, Vespasian, a soldier of great energy and greater genius, seized hold of the reins of government

with a strong and determined hand, and restored public affairs to something like a condition of safety. Septimius Severus was a second Vespasian. After the death of Commodus, the last of the Antonines, everything was again thrown into confusion. Pertinax, a mere puppet in the hands of the troops, reigned for a few months only. Didius Julianus, Pescennius Niger, Albinus, and Septimius Severus were almost simultaneously proclaimed by the legions; but Septimius, an intrepid and energetic general, popular with the troops and feared by the senate, soon triumphed over his rivals, and reigned not ingloriously for eighteen years. He gained the affections of the soldiery by the distribution of great largesses, and yet he restored great strictness of discipline. One of the boldest steps he took was to disband the praetorian guard. He kept the troops constantly employed in foreign and distant expeditions, moving them about from the banks of the Euphrates to the mountains of Scotland; and meanwhile at home he kept down any approach to conspiracies amongst the aristocracy by

sheer force : such was the sum total of his policy. He was a most war-loving emperor, and when lying on his death-bed, the last advice he gave to his sons Caracalla and Geta was this, that they should make any and every sacrifice to secure the allegiance of the army, and that with that once gained they might defy everything else. Little did he think then, that in refusing to choose a more solid foundation, he was slowly but surely preparing its downfall. Antonius Caracalla, the successor of Septimius, was as passionately devoted to the pursuit of arms as his father had been before him, but he possessed neither the same firmness of character nor the same administrative talent. He murdered his brother Geta, who would probably have murdered him had he not taken the initiative, and he played at the game of war for six years; eventually he was assassinated near Edessa by the praetorian prefect Macrinus, who wore the imperial purple for a very short period, as the army remained faithful in their allegiance to the family of Septimius Severus; and Elagabalus, the reputed son of Cara-

calla, was brought from the temple of the sun at Emesa, and proclaimed emperor by the troops. He was a mere child, fourteen years of age, precocious in vice and absurdly bigoted; he spent the whole of his time in the practice of religious ceremonies and ritual observances, in hopes of converting the world to the worship of his Syrian god. He, too, came to an untimely end; he was assassinated by the praetorians by the tacit consent of the senate, and was succeeded by his cousin Alexander Severus, in spite of his youth (he was barely thirteen years old), from A.D. 222 to A.D. 235. Alexander was a good emperor, but his qualities have been exaggerated by Christian writers. Learned, amiable, and careful of the public purse, he seems to have been deficient in military courage, and as the soldiery had long been accustomed to the prodigality of his predecessors, and neither loved nor feared so inoffensive a sovereign, they assassinated him near the frontiers of Germany, and chose as his successor a man after their own heart, the notoriously daring, muscular, and gigantic Maximinus.

Such is a condensed summary of the Augustan history during the period about the middle of which Philostratus published his life of Apollonius; it includes the lives of princes who, with the exception of the first, were below the ordinary average of men. And yet during this same period the empire remained comparatively tranquil, and passed without any noticeable convulsion into an entirely new era. It was in Caracalla's time that this very serious transformation was effected, which had long been dreamt of and intended by the imperial aristocracy, viz., that all who were freemen in the state should be created Roman citizens. It was the final blow to the old Roman commonwealth. From that time forth Rome became the conquest of the provinces. The religious universalism which is so main a feature in the teachings of Apollonius has its counterpart in the political universalism the introduction of which has given to the obtuse-minded Caracalla a position in history which he was far from anticipating; at the same time, however, when the true character of this period is closely examined,

it will be found in a thousand different ways and on the most undoubted authority that the *male* history of this period is only the superficial view, and that side by side with these sovereigns, who were either worthless or dissolute, there reigned some of the most accomplished and distinguished of women.

In the foremost rank we must place Julia Domna, the wife of Septimius Severus, the daughter of a priest of the sun at Emesa, in Cœlesyria. Her husband had chosen her for a wife, even before his own accession to the throne, in consequence of an oracle which attributed to her a royal nativity. Julia Domna was beautiful enough to make the prediction easy of fulfilment in some way or other, and it may fairly be presumed that her beauty and sound sense, added to a lively imagination, contributed with the promising oracle to make a deep impression on the heart of the austere general. As soon as she had been made empress she gathered round her the finest intellects and greatest orators of the day; amongst them were Dion Cassius, the historian, the emi-

nent lawyers Paulus, Papinian, and Ulpian, and Philostratus, the biographer of Apollonius. The influence she exercised over her husband must have been extraordinary, for Plautianus, the favourite of Severus, never ceased to offer her the most systematic opposition, and at last fell a victim in the deadly strife. We may, perhaps, attribute the disparaging rumours which were circulated concerning the chastity of Julia Domna to the interested calumnies of Plautianus. Her husband was not the man to wink at such aberrations of duty, more especially if it be true that to conjugal infidelity she added political treason. Her evil reputation increased in the reign of her son Caracalla, though, by-the-bye, according to some historians she was only his stepmother, Caracalla being the son of Septimius by a former wife. On the same authority it is stated that the imperial buffoon was captivated by her admirably-preserved charms, and that he contracted with her an incestuous marriage, a circumstance which led to her being called Jocasta by her enemies. Bayle maintains the improbability of the

whole story, and rests his opinion on the fact that it is not mentioned in any way by two contemporary historians, Dion Cassius and Herodian, neither of whom manifests the slightest predilection for the family of Severus, and both of whom mention Julia as the mother of Caracalla, without the slightest allusion to so disreputable a connection. We may safely infer, then, that it is a gross calumny invented by her enemies. She died a few days only after Caracalla, but she had long had an intimate and faithful companion in the person of her sister, Julia Maesa, a woman of great determination and greater ambition. She it was who brought the young Elagabalus from the temple of the sun, and introducing him to the troops, declared that he was the natural son of her daughter Soemis and Caracalla. Having triumphed over Macrinus, she and her daughter held the reins of government, whilst Elagabalus, the grandson of the former, was scandalising Rome by his habits as a sun-worshipper, and by his fanatical desire to introduce the Syrian worship of the sun. It was probably at

their instigation that this sorry specimen of an emperor, who had already compelled the senate to admit his mother as one of its members and to give her a seat at its councils, instituted a new senate composed of women, whose duty it was to issue decrees on the subject of dress, precedence, right to kiss hands, carriages, pearls on shoes, &c., but who would hardly limit their deliberations to such trifling matters, although these only are recorded by the historians of the period, probably not without intention. When it became quite clear to Maesa that the earlier popularity of Elagabalus was rapidly on the wane, she at once made him adopt, though much against his will, his cousin Alexander Severus, the son of her own daughter Julia Mamaea, the last of this extraordinary family. Soemis and Elagabalus died at the same time (A.D. 222); Maesa died soon after, and Julia Mamaea reigned until the year A.D. 235, under the auspices of Alexander Severus, who, according to the unanimous consent of all historians, yielded the blindest submission to his mother's will. To the very last she guided her

son's political career and regulated his moral conduct, and it must be added, in justice to her, that his private virtues contrasted most favourably with the dissolute and infamous life of his predecessor. She abused her power, however, to such a degree that she compelled him to separate from a young wife to whom he was tenderly and sincerely attached, and of whom his mother was jealous. Another of her mistakes consisted in her never having been able to control the army, which was in a constant state of revolt; so great was their insubordination that the soldiery assassinated Ulpian under the very eyes of the emperor, and refused to be conciliated by her bounties.

At last, when the veterans of Septimius Severus were replaced by fresh recruits, the army revolted more against Mamaea than against her son, and put both mother and son to death.

Hence, notwithstanding the periodical murders which seem to form a part of the institutions of the Roman empire, we find a regular dynasty of empresses, all of them issuing from an Eastern temple, and im-

bued with Eastern notions—women of extraordinary influence, and for nearly a quarter of a century—that is, from the death of Septimius to that of Alexander—in possession of supreme and absolute power. Now, when we can trace the existence of a prolonged female rule, more especially under the auspices of an absolute government, we may be quite sure that we shall soon find the direct consequences of female intervention in religious matters. And accordingly we find that in the contemporary writings, such as the histories of Dion Cassius and Herodian, in the Augustan history which is not of a much later date, and in the historical records of the Lower Empire, a consistent course of action in religious matters may be discerned, which, commencing in a somewhat mysterious way in the days of Julia Domna, is fully revealed under the auspices of Julia Mamaea. The absurdities and follies of Elagabalus are explained by what we may term the theology of his family on the mother's side. And we must further bear in mind that Philostratus wrote his book at the bidding of

Julia Domna, and that the book was completed a short time after her death.

The campaigns of Septimius Severus in the far East had extended the intellectual horizon. People began to see that the world was considerably larger than the Roman empire. The emperor had stayed some time in Tyana; he had been ill there, and his recovery may possibly have been attributed to the healing deity of the locality. His soldiers had brought home from their distant expeditions vague and wonderful accounts of the kingdoms of Persia and India, which their love of the marvellous had still further improved. In the Indian experiences of Philostratus there may be found an extraordinary mixture of reality and fanciful invention. Severus himself had begun to take a part in his wife's philosophic and literary amusements. It would seem that, having but little confidence in the future of all imperial institutions, and even in the combination of Greek and Roman civilisation, he looked with no unfavourable eye on the introduction of a foreign element into the moral life of his contemporaries. One circum-

stance, which is now an acknowledged fact, in the face of all appearances to the contrary, is, that he very materially modified the penalties and disabilities which affected both Jews and Christians, and that although he forbade all attempts to proselytise, the persecutions which arose during his reign must not be attributed to his enactments, or even to his wishes. Proculus, his favourite slave, was a Christian; the nurse of Caracalla was a Christian; and during his reign, when the influence of Julia Domna was paramount, the Christian Church enjoyed a period of perfect tranquillity. Matters remained unaltered under Elagabalus, although he entertained very decided religious opinions; but we have already seen that during his reign his grandmother, Maesa, and his mother, Soemis, were at the head of affairs. The condition of the Christians was, if anything, more favourable in the reign of Alexander Severus, who acted under the guidance of his mother, Mamaea. To Julia Domna must be awarded the credit of the first movement, in which all the other princesses of the same family joined,

as they respectively came to the throne, notwithstanding the individual differences which characterised them. This brings us to A.D. 235. The main idea, therefore, which pervades the whole of the religious movement over which they presided will be found in the work written by Philostratus of Lemnos, under the title of *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, and ordered to be written by Julia Domna. We shall now proceed to examine this strange history.

II.

APOLLONIUS was born in Tyana, a Greek city of Cappadocia, but it is not certain in what year. From several coincidences, however, in his work, we may conclude that the time of his birth was nearly identical with that of Jesus Christ. During the period which preceded his birth his mother was favoured with a kind of annunciation, sent by the god of divination and penetrative science. Proteus appeared to her, and informed her that the child of whom she was then pregnant was an incarnation of himself. When the child was

born, a chorus of swans, the messenger-birds of Apollo, celebrated his birth, and a thunderbolt, after falling from heaven, was seen to reascend. This was understood to signify a salutation offered by the gods to the newly-born infant. Endowed with marvellous precocity, and with a beauty which attracted the attention of every one, Apollonius carried on his studies in the first instance at Tarsus, the birth-place of Saint Paul, under the auspices and guidance of a learned rhetorician; but the dissolute morals of the place compelled him to remove, and thence he went to Egae, where he became an ardent admirer of Æsculapius and a determined follower of Pythagoras. Of his own accord he submitted to all the strictest tests of the severe novitiate and the old spiritual exercises which the philosopher of Samos imposed rigidly upon all his disciples, and shortly after he was seen to appear in the garb and manner peculiar to the sect of the Pythagoreans, that is to say, clothed in a linen tunic, barefooted, with long hair, and abstaining from meat and wine. His ideas on the uselessness, or rather the sin-

fulness, of bloody sacrifices—his remarks, which were characterised by a wisdom far above his years—the excellent advice he gave to those who came to consult Æsculapius—all contributed to strike the priests of that god with astonishment; and the general admiration in which he was held was only heightened when, at the age of twenty, he gave up his patrimony for the benefit of his family, and took a vow of perpetual chastity. After a lapse of five years, which, according to Pythagorean rule, he spent in absolute silence, he began to travel about in Asia Minor, commencing his journey at Antioch. In every place the subjects of his teaching were the precepts of true wisdom, the respect due to the gods, the true mode of worshipping them, and the necessity of returning to those rites of more ancient times which had either fallen into disuse or been strangely altered. Disciples were already following him in every place. Meanwhile, however, he did not consider himself sufficiently advanced, and desiring, as he did, to attain to higher degrees of wisdom than had been reached by Pythagoras and

Plato, he left for India, intending there, amongst the Brahmins, to drink deeply of the pre-eminently pure and divine science. Passing through Babylon, he visited the Magians. It was during this voyage that he was joined by a disciple from Nineveh, named Damis, and that he was enabled, besides the knowledge he possessed of all human languages (which, by the way, he had never been obliged to learn), to understand the language used by animals amongst themselves. Delighted to entertain such a guest, the King of Babylon kept him under his roof and listened to his teaching with the most profound attention for a period of eight months.

At last Apollonius proceeded on his travels to India, and crossed "the Caucasus," says Philostratus with all gravity, whose geographical ignorance, even as compared with that of the ancients, is marvellous. It is quite true that he is only repeating, with exemplary faithfulness, the statement of the historian Damis, whose imagination is of the liveliest. It is recorded of Damis, by himself, that as he

crossed the Caucasus* he saw the chains with which, in old times, Prometheus had been bound. We must do him the justice to say, however, that in order to sustain the character of a truthful and conscientious historian, he adds that he could not possibly tell "what metal they were made of."

After crossing the Caucasus, another king, an Indian potentate of matchless virtue—almost a Pythagorean in his mode of life—bestowed all kinds of admiration and praise upon Apollonius, and entertained him most hospitably. From this prince it was that he received his earliest information respecting the sages of India. They lived, he heard, on a mountain, from the summit of which they issued their rolling thunders, and drove back such rash

* It may be objected, in defence of Philostratus, that among the ancients the Paropamisus range (now the Hindoo Koosh) was sometimes called the Indian Caucasus. But in addition to the fact that Philostratus makes no distinction between the two ranges, his remarks on the chains of Prometheus, which were seen by Damis as he crossed the mountains which divide Persia from India, settle the question as to his real meaning; for it was always agreed that the tortures of Prometheus took place on Mount Caucasus, properly so called.

mortals as attempted the ascent without their permission. The nearer you approached the mountain, the more wonderful were the things you saw. For instance, there was an insect there which distilled an oil the use of which was to burn up the walls of an enemy's town with flames that could not be extinguished. Farther up a woman might be seen who was black from the head to the waist, and white from the waist to the feet, and who had been so formed designedly by Nature that she might receive the worship offered to the Indian Venus. In other places there were fields of pepper-plants, cultivated by apes, and enormous serpents, which could be caught by merely placing a red rag, inscribed with certain magic characters, over the spots they usually frequented; and in the heads of these serpents there were precious stones which possessed the same virtue as the ring of Gyges. Then you came to the holy mountain: it was surrounded by a mist which could either be thickened or dissolved at the will of the wise men. As you ascended the mountain, you met with a fire which

purifies from all pollution, a well which delivers oracles, two large stone vases, which contain, the one wind and the other rain, both at the disposal of the sages, by whom it was asserted that the mountain was the navel or centre of India. There they worshipped fire, which they boasted had been brought down directly from the sun, the peculiar prerogative of Prometheus, and the symbol both to them and to him of inventive science. With his own eyes Damis saw these sages rise up into the air, to the height of two cubits, without any extraneous support and without any trickery whatsoever. The wise men do not live in houses, but when it rains they summon a cloud and shelter under it. They wear their hair long, have white mitres on their heads, and are clothed in linen garments, woven from a peculiar kind of flax which it is only lawful for themselves to gather. Their prodigious wisdom overwhelmed even Apollonius, who was not frequently astonished. They are in possession of absolute science; they know at once the past history of every one they see; they can answer all questions. When

asked, "Who are you?" they answer, "We are gods." "Why?" "Because we are virtuous." The biographer of Apollonius, who, amidst all the virtues with which he has adorned his hero, has certainly omitted that of modesty, goes on to say that the latter was deeply affected by the intense wisdom of this reply. As might have been expected, Apollonius receives from the Brahmins a full, complete, and literal confirmation of the doctrines of Pythagoras. The chief amongst them, one Iarchas, remembers having been "some other"—an ancient king or a demigod in a country the praises of which he sings with that extreme humility which is so characteristic of the whole of that venerable corporation. Next to him we have Palamedes, one of the heroes of the Trojan war, who, in his new existence on earth, reappears as a Brahmin. It may be stated here by the way that Apollonius remembers having been a pilot in some former stage of existence, and how he had duped a number of Phœnician pirates who had tried to drag him into one of their predatory schemes. The conversations with the

wise men of India are constantly interrupted by a series of events the marvellousness of which is always on the increase. At one time tripods are seen to move of their own accord; at another, vessels of brass containing a refreshing beverage present themselves to the lips of the thirsty; a cup is miraculously replenished the moment it has been emptied; there is a stone, too, which attracts all others to itself; and all this to illustrate a pantheistic doctrine, according to which the world is an animated creature, male and female in itself, in order to be self-creating, and under the government of one supreme god, who is aided by a number of subordinate gods, who form a part of the one great whole. Apollonius is soon initiated by his hosts in the science of astrology and divination. Damis was not admitted to these meetings, and as Apollonius thought fit to keep his secret knowledge to himself, Philostratus was unable to reveal the nature of the queen of sciences. At last, after five months of wonderment and study, Apollonius left the wise men who had stored his mind with

such superhuman lore, and with whom he had lived on such familiar terms, and returned by way of the Erythraean Sea, the Euphrates, Babylon, and Asia Minor; then, not wishing to settle in Antioch, in consequence of the licentiousness of its morals, he directed his steps towards Ionia, and made a triumphant entry into Ephesus.

The period of initiations had now passed, and from that time Apollonius began his travels as a reformer and a prophet. Ephesus, a city notorious for its frivolity and effeminacy, was brought back by his teaching to the cultivation of philosophy and to the practice of virtue. The dissensions of Smyrna were allayed by his wisdom. After this he was recalled to Ephesus, where the plague was committing fearful ravages. In order to save the city from the visitation, he ordered an aged pauper to be stoned to death; and when the heap of stones by which he had been murdered and almost buried had been removed, a large black dog was found in the place where he ought to have been, from which circumstance it was concluded

that the old pauper could have been nothing but an evil spirit. Thence he went to Greece, remaining for a short time in Troy, where he conversed with the shade of Achilles, and was informed that the fair Helen had never been in the city of Priam at all. In Lesbos he visited the temple of Orpheus, and landed at Athens, where he healed a young man who was possessed of devils, interrupting himself, in order to do this, in a sermon against the voluptuous dances of Attica. Then he visited all the oracles of Greece, proclaiming himself as a reformer and restorer of the ancient religious rites.

In Corinth he opened the eyes of one of his disciples and enabled him to see that a woman, who to all appearance was most beautiful and wealthy, and to whom he was inordinately attached, was in reality a Lamia, one of those evil spirits who seduce the affections of young men and suck out their life-blood in the night at their leisure. At Lacedaemon he restored the ancient code of laws. In Olympia he was not only present at the games, but was almost worshipped by the attendant

crowds. Thence he passed into Crete, and last of all went to Rome.

Nero was emperor at the time. The sworn enemy of all philosophers, he persecuted them under the pretext that they were magicians; accordingly the majority of the disciples of Apollonius forsook him, not daring to face the furious onslaughts of a tyrant like Nero. Apollonius, however, fearless of everything, entered the capital and spent his time in the various temples, where his religious discourses produced an immense sensation. Tegellinus, the praetorian prefect, ordered him to be arrested as a seditious person; but, astounded by his surprising replies, and thinking that he had to do with some evil spirit, and not with a man, he directed that he should be set at liberty. Apollonius at once embraced the opportunity of his being liberated to restore to life a young girl who had been dead some time; and then, as Nero, on his departure for Greece, had expelled all the philosophers from Rome, he determined to visit what was then supposed to be the far West—*i.e.*, Spain and Africa.

There, again, he witnessed innumerable wonders; amongst others, the phenomenon of the tides, which he accounts for (in a very learned dissertation) by the action of submarine winds, which blow from caverns situated on each side of the ocean, and which form, as it were, its breathing apparatus. It is easy, in this, to trace the foundation on which the natural philosophy of the ancients rested, according to which it was held that the world was endued with life, and was, in point of fact, an animated creature. In the course of that voyage his heart rejoiced at the news that Vindex had raised the standard of revolt in Gaul. Further than this, his biographer would have us believe that Apollonius himself had prepared the movement, in concert with the Governor of Baetica. In Sicily he hears of the flight and death of Nero, and foretells the short reign of his three immediate successors. He reappears in Greece, visits Chios and Rhodes, still in the character of a reformer, and lands at Alexandria, having long wished to study Egyptian science, which was so much spoken of at that time, in the very land of

its birth. There it was that Vespasian, who was aiming at the supreme power, conferred with him on the art of governing, and that Apollonius incurred the jealous hatred of Euphrates, a man who had been one of his earliest admirers, but who had now become the confidential adviser of Vespasian, wishing him to restore the old Roman commonwealth. Apollonius, however, like a true disciple of Pythagoras, is but indifferently liberal in his views. In his eyes, an enlightened despotism is the best form of government. "The rule of one man, who watches over the good of all," is the secret of true democracy. It is hardly necessary to add that Vespasian is of the same opinion.

About the same period our soothsayer and philosopher recognised the King Amasis under the form of a tame lion, and caused royal honours to be paid to him. Then he sailed up the Nile, followed by the most courageous of his disciples, and from the deck of his ship delivers a series of religious addresses. It was like an exposition of his religious belief. Eventually he reached the country of the Gymno-

sophists, those Egyptian philosophers who lived habitually in a state of perfect nudity, and devoted themselves wholly to the study of all heavenly truths; but he found them far inferior to a similar sect on the banks of the Ganges. Philostratus is evidently jealous of the wisdom evinced on the banks of the Nile. He allows, however, that very wonderful things are found among the Gymnosophists. They have trees, for instance, amongst them which are endued with intelligence, and bow politely to the passers-by. But in spite of these marvels, Apollonius very learnedly proves the inferiority of this branch of the sect, and does it with such success that Thespesion, who is usually as black as a raven, is seen to blush scarlet from head to foot. The mythology of Egypt is another object of his bitterest criticism. He finds fault with the grotesqueness of the Egyptian idols which represent the head of a dog and a sparrow-hawk, forgetting, no doubt, that in this respect, at least, India had but slight reason to reproach Egypt.

After sailing up to the sources of the Nile, or rather to the great cataracts which

were then mistaken for the real source of the river, he returned from these extreme limits of the world to civilised lands, and from this period may be dated what we may term the *Passion* of Apollonius. Domitian, a second Nero, was emperor, exceeding, if that were possible, his prototype, in wickedness. Apollonius began to travel up and down the empire, sowing everywhere the seeds of discontent and rebellion against the crowned monster. Though at a distance, he fosters in Rome itself a conspiracy in favour of the virtuous Nerva, whose imminent elevation to the throne he foresees with certainty. Having been warned of this, Domitian ordered him to be arrested, when the dauntless philosopher, taking the initiative, appears of his own free will in the very heart of Rome, in spite of the entreaties of his disciples and of Damis himself that he should not go up to the city. There he meets again with an old acquaintance, the praetorian prefect Elian, who does all he can to save him from the fury of the imperial tyrant, and who tells him that the main charge he will have to meet is that

he has been guilty of cutting up a young (child) to pieces in the course of some magic incantation—an accusation which was all the more unjust and abominable as Apollonius had always inveighed most loudly against bloody sacrifices. When in prison, the philosopher comforts and exhorts his fellow-prisoners. He appears before the emperor, who is anxious to inquire personally into the opinions of his opponent, and as the conversation assumes a phase not very favourable to the cause of the despot, Domitian makes a sort of *Ecce homo* of Apollonius, orders that his beard and his hair be shaved, and that he himself be bound in chains and sent to prison in company with the vilest malefactors. Apollonius endures this ignominious treatment most meekly, and taking advantage of a few moments when he is alone with Damis, he shows him that it depends entirely upon himself and his own will whether he shall shake off his chains or remain fettered by them. "And Damis understood then that Apollonius was a god, and by nature more than man." From that time forth he no longer offers

any objection to his master's wishes. The latter bids him leave Rome, join his friend Demetrius at Puteoli, and there wait for him. Meanwhile he is summoned once more to the presence of Domitian, and is questioned as to his knowledge of philosophy, his powers of divination, and his mode of life. To all these questions he gives replies which are so pertinent, that the emperor is almost inclined to release him, when all at once Apollonius disappears from the sight of all present. Although the strictest search is made and people are sent in all directions to look for him, they declare on their return that no one has seen him, and none can see him, for it is a supernatural disappearance. On the evening of the day when this miracle took place, Demetrius and Damis were conversing together at Puteoli, a small town which was about 150 miles from Rome. They had given up all hopes of again seeing the man by whose labours they thought the empire would have been saved, when suddenly a mysterious noise was heard, and Apollonius stood before them. They were forced to take him by

the hand before they could fully believe that it was real flesh and blood and not a spectre they beheld. From that time his passion was ended, and the glories of his triumph begin. On his return to Greece, Apollonius finds the whole population ready to fall at his feet. But he wishes to descend into the lower world, or, in other words, to receive the only initiation which he had not undergone as yet, that which was usually sought in the cave of Trophonius. In spite of the priests, he penetrated into the cave, through the aid and encouragement of Trophonius himself, with whom he conversed for seven whole days. He entered the subterranean world at Lebadea, in Bœotia, and came out of it in Aulis. He had asked the god of the lower world which was the queen of all philosophies: like the wise men of the upper regions, the god answered, "That of Pythagoras."

Apollonius died in Asia Minor. At Ephesus he was enabled by his power of second-sight to witness the murder of Domitian as though he had been present at it, and he described it in such minute

detail to the Ephesians that they could hardly believe their own ears; but they must have been compelled to believe in him fully when the news of the event reached them through the ordinary channels. Apollonius was at that time between eighty and ninety years old, and some say more than a hundred. Many rumours were circulated respecting his death, of which the faithful Damis was not a witness, as his master had intrusted him with a message to Nerva, and it was during his absence that he disappeared from amongst men. The generally-received account was, that having gone to Crete, Apollonius went into the temple of Diana Dictynna, and that he never came out of it again. Young maidens' voices were heard singing in the air, "Quit the earth, ascend up into heaven." It is added that some few years after he appeared suddenly to a young unbeliever who had ridiculed his doctrine, and who fell to the ground awe-struck by the vision, in the greatest consternation and most penitent alarm. After his death, the city of Tyana paid him divine honours, and the universal respect in which he was

held by the whole of the Pagan world testified to the deep impression which the life of this supernatural being had left indelibly fixed in their minds, an impression which caused one of his contemporaries to exclaim, "We have a god living amongst us."

Such is a summary of the chief events in the life of Apollonius, as we find them recorded in his biography written by Philostratus. We shall now be in a position to make a few remarks on his miracles, his teaching, and his character generally.

Several of his miracles have been mentioned; many more might have been added. It is perfectly clear that the biographer of Apollonius relied on the unlimited credulity of his readers; but there is one feature which deserves our attention more than the strange stories recorded by Philostratus, and that is the extreme anxiety he manifests to exculpate Apollonius from the slightest suspicion of having anything to do with sorcery. The magicians of that day were a numerous body of impostors, deservedly held in contempt by all sensible people, and yet dreaded and con-

sulted by the majority. They were in reality the sorcerers of the period; and it is quite sufficient to have read a work like the biography of Philostratus to be fully convinced of the serious mistake made by some contemporary historians when they say that magic was one of the consequences of Christianity, in this sense, viz., that it was the legitimate reaction of natural religion as opposed to priestly tyranny and oppression. It is far more reasonable to conclude, that with all its illusions and all its impostures, this magic was one of the far too numerous relics of polytheism which Christianity, even in our own day, has not been able to eradicate entirely. The magician of ancient times wrought his magic wonders, as the witch of our own days is said to do, either by the instrumentality of evil spirits, or by virtue of certain forms, ceremonies, and incantations which are of an immoral tendency. Accordingly we find that the sorcerer is a dangerous creature, whose sole aim is to secure his own personal benefit and the satisfaction of his evil passions; now the ruling power for the

time being is perfectly justified in putting down such a character. Far different in nature is the wonder-worker who, like Apollonius, performs miracles by virtue of his higher knowledge and his communion with the gods. In order to attain to such a power he must practise virtue with the greatest austerity; he must be distinguished by the strictest purity of morals, and must be obedient to the severest of disciplines. Through these he is enabled to put spirits of impurity to flight, to foretell future events, to discern the secret thoughts of others, to be visible or invisible at will: in a word, Apollonius owes his power not to magic but to theurgy, and if it be said that theurgy has not more truth in it than magic, if like the latter it only denotes a gross ignorance of Nature and her irrefragable laws, at any rate it proceeds, in a moral point of view, from a much higher source.

As regards the philosophical and religious doctrine of Apollonius, we have already alluded to the theological principle which lies at the root of it. It consists of a kind of pantheism clothed in polytheistic

forms, which does not seek to destroy individual responsibility by absorbing it into the great ALL, but on the contrary evinces a very decided monotheistic tendency. Apollonius seems inclined to believe that the various gods who are worshipped by the people are symbols or different representations of one and the same deity. This is the reason why he visits all the temples without distinction, and endeavours to purify the forms of worship adopted in them from every element of licentiousness which the superstition of the vulgar might have mixed up with them. Venus herself must become the goddess of pure love, free from all carnal lust. Thus will the moral sense become the means of discerning religious truth, and of rectifying with authority the most prevalent traditions. Accordingly, we frequently find that Apollonius subjects the traditional creeds and mythologies to the most fearless criticism. Like Plato, he blames the poets for having lowered the character of the gods by their fabulous descriptions. It seems absurd to him that Minos, cruel tyrant as he was, should ad-

minister justice in hell, whilst a good king like Tantalus is doomed to a frightful punishment. He laughs at the stories of the wars of the giants with the gods, and of Vulcan striking his anvil in the deep caverns of Ætna. The gods, he thinks, should only be represented under the most ideal forms, and the masterpieces of religious art are only valuable so far as they reflect in some degree the ever-beautiful. The sun is the purest and most fitting symbol of the Deity, and hence Apollonius pays homage before all others to the sun and to the sun-gods, Apollo, Æsculapius, Helios, and Hercules. His own name is an indication of his entire devotedness to the worship of the sun. The Brahmins, the wisest of men, who in reality live by his substance, worship the sun all the day long. The essence of the gods is the light of heaven. By partaking of it man becomes a god, and this is only natural in man, inasmuch as his soul is a ray of the Divine essence, imprisoned in the body for awhile, and journeying through a series of existences until the moment when it shall have been sufficiently

trained in science and in the practice of virtue to gain admission into the heavenly regions. Hence arises the propriety and the absolute necessity of asceticism: in other words, of war against the flesh, which is the destructive prison-house of the soul. Apollonius and his followers, like Pythagoras and his disciples, constitute a regular order of Pagan monks, and when we bear in mind that apart from all contact with Christian churches, the Paganism of the far East has furnished a very similar instance for centuries, we cannot but wonder at the strange obstinacy of certain modern writers who assert that the monastic life is one of the chief and most characteristic institutions of Christianity. The determined efforts of Paganism to become a moral religion without any great modification of forms or of creeds are traceable both in the religious teaching and in the theurgy of Apollonius. It is no longer Nature viewed through her severer or gentler phenomena; it is no longer the hero who subdues monsters, or the formidable champion of right against wrong, who will concentrate in himself the reli-

gious veneration of the world, but it is the wise philosopher who leads all but a Divine life in the midst of his fellow-men, and who teaches them how to raise themselves to the same high level which he himself has reached. But how true it is that a religion is never quite false to the principle on which it is founded! Not only does Apollonius attach an inherent efficacy to outward rites, but even in his reformed Paganism we can see at once the error and the fundamental delusion which have given birth to every system of polytheism —viz., the confusion of the natural with the spiritual, of the visible phenomenon with the unseen reality which seems more or less to bear some analogy to that phenomenon. It is not easy to say with certainty whether Apollonius really worships the sun itself, or whether he looks upon it as the highest manifestation of God. One thing, however, is certain—viz., that he explains the superior wisdom of the Brahmins by the circumstance that, living as they do on an exceedingly high mountain, and thus being able to breathe the pure ether, they possess all

moral light, because they are constantly drawing from the true source of all physical light. Here we have the same method of reasoning as in that gross myth, the birth of Minerva, the pure light which follows the storm issuing from the cleft forehead of her father the sky. According to the myth, the physical deity became the symbol of clear and penetrating wisdom. It was hardly worth while that Apollonius should have made such a display of Pagan rationalism if he was so soon to fall again into the most complete mythological system.

A contrast, or rather an inconsistency, of the same character may be noticed in the views of Apollonius on humanity in general. On the one hand, the whole of his life and the whole of his teaching are founded on the idea that all men are called to receive and practise truth. In one sense he can say, like St. Paul, that for him there is neither Greek nor barbarian. He speaks and acts as a reformer, on the banks of the Euphrates as well as on the Nile, and in Spain as well as in Æthiopia. The highest wisdom, according to his view, is

found amongst the inhabitants of India, beyond the limits of the empire. Ideas like these prove undoubtedly that that narrow-minded notion of nationality, that particularly isolated view of mankind, which had been fostered by the various religions of Paganism (which were, as might be expected, essentially local and national), had gradually yielded to the pressure of outward circumstances, and to the Roman yoke which was now borne by so many hundreds of conquered nations. We have before us a regular system of universalism—a kind of Pagan universalism; and yet we can trace through it all, and at every step, the aristocratic spirit of antiquity. Grecian pride, and the high disdain which every man born and nurtured in Grecian civilisation felt for all other nations, were ever asserting their rights. We are reminded by this of the case of the Christianised Jews in the two first centuries, who preached the doctrines of a religion which in theory was to be universal, and yet which was to retain, at all costs, the Divine and exclusive privileges of the Israelites. With them, as with

the hero of Philostratus, national prejudice is found to be stronger than the new principle, of which, nevertheless, they pretend to be the apostles. Neither do we find in the Pagan gospel of Apollonius the trickling of the compassionate and sympathising tear which in the Christian Gospel is shed so constantly at the sight of the sufferings of the lowly and the poor. Apollonius heals many sick people, and does much good, but he does it coldly, correctly, and more like an artist who is trying to eliminate all sounds of discord from the great harmonies of Nature, than like one who is touched by the infirmities and sufferings of that sacred being, so great and yet so miserable, whom we call *man*. He can realise what it is to be called a "Son of God;" but he would neither risk his fame nor his happiness to merit the name of "son of man." Besides, in all violations of the moral law he only sees a series of evil and isolated acts which depend solely upon the free will of each individual; but, like many a modern philosopher, he is blind to that fundamental incompetency to do the good which our

conscience dictates which exists in us all —that tendency to selfishness, that proneness to evil, which bears the same relation to particular and successive faults as the stem does to the branches and the leaves and the fruits of a tree. Hence his political system is even below the average. It is only when the natural selfishness of the human heart has been fully realised that a guarantee is sought against the ever-possible encroachments of an autocracy in the various methods of control extant, such as in collective representation, in publicity, in the personal responsibility of the ruling authorities—in a word, in all the free institutions of a free state. Apollonius believed in the possibility of a well-meaning and benevolent despotism, and could not imagine a better form of government. If the despot be a bad man, he must be removed by violent means; and accordingly Apollonius is not unwilling to meddle in two conspiracies. The Roman empire had lasted a long time, and a religious thinker might have known that human nature was too weak to turn the good and virtuous characters of sovereigns into a permanent

institution. However, it must be granted that a certain atmosphere of pure and true morality pervades the whole of this system of teaching. There is a well-established theory in it, that virtue is the only foundation of happiness and true piety. It is a growth which one scarcely expected to find flourishing so luxuriantly in a decidedly Pagan country. We must not forget that Apollonius is not only a philosopher, a moralist, like Epictetus or Zeno —he is at the same time a popular reformer, an initiator, a kind of universal priest; and the main idea in his biography is this, that a philosopher who is so holy is entitled to Divine honours, and, in point of fact, that he is a god in human form. But, on the other hand, even if we take for granted the statements which are made in the biography, and inquire how far we can share unreservedly in the admiration lavished upon the sage by his biographer, we shall soon find that his ideal and ours differ very widely. It is quite true that Apollonius is chaste and temperate—that he is actuated by the noble desire to know, and the still nobler desire to communicate

his knowledge to mankind. He is ingenious, learned, and, generally speaking, there is a something at once lively and original in his language when he does not indulge in too long an oration—a something which is admirably suited to the character of a popular reformer; but when we have admitted all this, what a strange character we have before us, and frequently how ridiculous he seems! In the midst of his attempts to reform a religion which, according to his own statement, is disfigured by foolishness and ignorance, he is himself superstitious to a degree. He believes in omens, in female vampires, in elephants who hurl javelins in battle, in the stone which eagles place in their nests to protect their young from serpents, in talismans. Pages might be filled with the enumeration of all the silly details which he records with all the seriousness of a new revelation. If his disciples admire him, they cannot exceed his admiration of himself. He is constantly in an attitude —he becomes intolerable. He is full of mannerisms, and is artificial from head to foot. Ever boastful, his controversies are

more like the hectorings of a bully. He is the Don Quixote of religious and moral perfection. Damis might well be called his Sancho Panza; for the latter, notwithstanding the great pleasure he experiences in following about this brave knight-errant of truth, as though he were his shadow, is especially remarkable for the good common sense of his replies to some of his master's sublime theories, and also for the exigencies of an excellent appetite. When Apollonius wants to deliver himself of some particularly high-flown sentiment, he usually propounds to Damis some knotty point for his solution; Damis gives an absurd reply, which furnishes our incomparable philosopher with an opportunity to exhibit his overwhelming superiority, and Damis, who is apparently a man of excellent temper and spirits, laughs at his own folly. In his longer discourses, Apollonius manifests an intolerable pedantry, and so confirmed is his habit of treating every subject as though he were delivering a rhetorical lecture upon it, that he more frequently seems to be listening to his own talking than to be attending to his think-

ing. Many a time, as he discourses, he forgets the severe morality which he professes, so that in one of his sermons he goes so far as to exculpate perjury.

These critical remarks must be understood to apply solely to the Apollonius of Philostratus, for before we proceed to discuss the authenticity of the man and his history, we must state at once our belief that the historian has drawn largely upon his imagination for the description of a hero whom he wished to represent, no doubt, as the ideal of human perfection. Philostratus was a man of great genius, though his style is bombastic. The society of which he was a member, and for which he wrote, contained in its ranks men of the greatest eminence in the state. Apparently, the faults which to us are so glaring, more especially in a religious reformer, were more leniently viewed by the people of the period; with this, however, we have nothing to do. What we have to do now is to give a brief historical sketch of the work which was written by the favourite of Julia Domna, and to determine its real value.

III.

It is a noticeable circumstance that before the time of Philostratus, Apollonius had been but little heard of, whereas, both during his lifetime and after it, the sage of Tyana could count many and warm admirers. A temple was erected to his honour by Caracalla; Alexander Severus placed him by the side of Christ, and Abraham, and Orpheus, amongst his household gods. At Ephesus he was worshipped under the title of Hercules, the warder off of evil (Ἀλεξίκακος). The Emperor Aurelian spares the city of Tyana, which he had sworn to destroy, out of regard for Apollonius, who appears to him the day before the one on which he had determined to massacre the inhabitants. The historians Dion Cassius and Vopiscus, the former a contemporary of Philostratus, and the latter one of the writers of the Augustan history, hold him in the same veneration. His reputation as a holy man is so well established that Sidonius Apollinaris and Cassiodorus, both Christians, speak loudly and eloquently in his praise.

The former, more of a rhetorician and a man of letters than a bishop, translated his biography into Latin. It is somewhat extraordinary that the philosophical school of Alexandria which was represented by Porphyry and Iamblichus did not esteem him more than they did, but they probably had their reasons. On the other hand, however, Hierocles, one of the last and most brilliant champions of expiring Paganism, in his *Discursus Philalethes*, seized eagerly upon the character of Apollonius, and set it up in opposition to the Christ of the Gospels. He succeeded, it appears, to some extent, for his opponent, Eusebius of Caesarea, states that this portion of the attacks of Hierocles requires a special reply, whilst the rest of his work is a mere repetition of the old objections made against Christianity from the earliest times. Lactantius also deems it necessary to write against the parallel which had been drawn by Hierocles, and he does it with such warmth and energy that the importance which was attached to the controversies of the period may be easily imagined. Arnobius and the fathers of

the fourth century agree in attributing the miracles of Apollonius to magic, which would imply that the miracles themselves were recorded as being opposed to it. As late as the fifth century we find one Volusian, a proconsul of Africa, descended from an old Roman family and still strongly attached to the religion of his ancestors, almost worshipping Apollonius of Tyana as a supernatural being. All these circumstances combined tend to prove that the work of Philostratus, far from being read as a mere romance, held a much more important place in the religious discussions of the third and fourth centuries than any book could have done which had only been written to amuse a select circle of wits.

From the fifth century downwards, little is said about the book or its hero, at least in the West. The undoubted triumph of the Church deprives it of all positive interest. The night of the Middle Ages had set in. Not till the time of the Renaissance do we see the life of Apollonius brought to light again with many other specimens of ancient art, all

of them doubtless surprised to see the light of day once more. Even then, however, there was something suspicious about this resuscitated Apollonius, so much so that the learned Aldus Manutius hesitated for a time before he granted the publicity of the press to the work of Philostratus. At last he resolved to do so, but took care to publish at the same time the reply of Eusebius to Hierocles, and thus to give, as he expressed it himself, the bane with the antidote. Subsequently, Pico della Mirandola in the fifteenth century, and Jean Bodin and Baronius in the sixteenth, denounced Apollonius as a vile and detestable magician. Without entirely reversing so sweeping a verdict, the seventeenth century seemed to think that the biography of the philosopher of Tyana was something more than a record of sorcery, and accordingly Daniel Huet, the famous Bishop of Avranches, expressed an opinion on the subject which ever since that time has had great weight with all thoughtful minds. "Philostratus," he says, "seems to have made it his chief aim to depreciate both the Christian faith and Christian

doctrine, both of which were progressing wonderfully at that time, by the exhibition on the opposite side of that shallow representation of a miraculous science, holiness, and virtue. He invented a character in imitation of Christ, and introduced almost all the incidents in the life of Jesus Christ into the history of Apollonius in order that the Pagans might have no cause to envy the Christians; by doing which he inadvertently enhanced the glory of Christ, for by falsely attributing to another the real character of the Saviour, he gave to the latter the praise which is His just due, and indirectly held Him up to the admiration and praise of others."

Again in the eighteenth century the Deists renewed the attacks made of old by Hierocles. Resting their arguments on the undeniable similarity between the Christ of the Gospels and Apollonius of Tyana, they maintained that both histories were equally apocryphal. In 1680, Charles Blount, an English Deist, pushed this dilemma still further, and said that we must either admit the truth of the miracles of Apollonius as well as those of Jesus

Christ, or if the former are untrue, he maintained that there was no better ground for believing the latter to be true. Voltaire, Le Grand d'Aussy, and Castillon all wrote to the same effect. It is even said by some that Castillon's French translation was dedicated to Pope Clement XIV., with an ironical preface, signed Philalethes, and supposed to have been written by Frederick II. As a natural consequence, in Germany more especially, numberless refutations were written in answer to these modern imitators of Hierocles. But it was agreed on both sides that the work of Philostratus was written and published in a spirit decidedly hostile to Christianity.

There was no doubt that a reaction would take place in so exaggerated a notion, and that reaction is now visible in the writings of Buhle, Jacobs, and Neander. It is quite true that they have gone into the opposite extreme. It has been denied of late that there ever was any intentional reference in the life of Apollonius to Christianity or to the Gospel writings. Great stress has been laid upon the cir-

cumstance that there is the most complete silence in the book as regards Jesus and His disciples. They are never mentioned; the existence of the Christian Church is ignored; and yet the book contains attacks upon all kinds of religious and moral errors; hence, it is argued, any similarity which may exist between the life of Christ and that of the Pagan reformer is either accidental or forced. Can we agree with these opinions? Are there no other proofs that the life of Apollonius is moulded on a pattern which is almost identical with the Gospel story? Apollonius is born in a mysterious way about the same time as Christ. Like Him he went through a period of preparation during which he displayed wonderful precocity in religious matters; then came a season of public and positive activity; then a passion, a kind of resurrection, and an ascension. The messengers of Apollo sang at his birth as the angels did at that of Jesus. He is exposed to the attacks of enemies, though always engaged in doing good. He goes about from place to place whilst carrying out his work of reform; he is accompanied by his

favourite disciples, amongst whom, however, disaffection, discouragement, and even treachery make their appearance. When the hour of danger is at hand, in spite of the prudent advice of his friends, he goes straight to Rome, where Domitian is seeking to kill him, just as Jesus went up to Jerusalem and to certain death. Before that he had been the victim of the murderous jealousy of Nero, as Jesus had been exposed to the machinations of Herod Antipas. Like Jesus, he is accused of working his miracles of mercy by the aid of magic and unlawful arts, whereas he can only succeed in working them because he is the friend of the gods, and worthy to be esteemed as such. Like Jesus, on the road to Damascus, he fills an avowed enemy with wondering dismay by a triumphant apparition several years after his ascension.

One very remarkable circumstance in a Greek work, written in a Greek spirit, is the great number of cases in which evil spirits are driven out at the bidding of Apollonius. He speaks to them, as it is said that Christ did, with authority. The

young man who was possessed, at Athens, through whom the devil utters cries of fear and rage, and who cannot face the look of Apollonius, reminds the attentive reader of the Gospel narrative of the demoniac of Gadara. Neither is cured until some outward visible circumstance has taken place which gives the people reason to believe that the devil has really gone out. In the one case the herd of swine rush down into the lake; in the other, a statue falls, overthrown by the violence of the evil spirit as he departed out of the young man. Again, another case of possession is singularly like the one of the epileptic child in the three first gospels. In Rome, Apollonius restores a young girl to life under circumstances which immediately remind us of the return to life of the daughter of Jairus. It may be remarked even still further, that the two stories are so recorded that a careful critic may ask himself with respect to each whether the young girl who was brought to life again had really been dead at all. The lame, the halt, and the blind come in crowds to be healed by the laying

on hands of Iarchas, the chief of the Indian sages, from whom we know that Apollonius derives his knowledge and his power. His miraculous appearances to his friends Damis and Demetrius, who think at first that he is a spirit, remind us at once, by the way in which they are told, of the appearances of Jesus after His death, and, like the appearances of Apollonius, they are no longer subject to the laws which regulate the movements of matter in space.

This astonishing similarity must not be exaggerated as though Philostratus had always and throughout his work kept his artistic and rhetorical taste and his imaginative love of the marvellous in a kind of subjection to a desire to reproduce the person of Jesus Christ in all its exact minuteness of detail. But surely all the points of resemblance which we have glanced at can neither be accidental nor imaginary. It is all the more difficult to believe this to be the case when we reflect that it can be stated positively that Philostratus evidently devotes much attention to Christianity, if he does not allude to it.

Christian forms, traditions, and objections are mirrored upon his written thoughts, and very frequently determine the language in which those thoughts are expressed. Apollonius is not only like Jesus Christ, but he combines in his own person many of the characteristics of the Apostles. Like Paul he travels up and down the world from east to west, and like him, too, he is the victim of Nero's tyranny. Like John, according to a tradition which prevailed even in his time, he is persecuted by Domitian. He understands and speaks all the languages in the world, and consequently had nothing to be envious of as regards the earliest disciples in what was called the gift of tongues. He is accused of sacrificing children with certain mysterious ceremonies: the early Christians were charged with the same offence by the ignorant of their day. In Sicily he witnessed the birth of a three-headed monster, and inferred from this that the three immediate successors of Nero, Galba, Vitellius, and Otho would reign at the same time, and for a short period only; this might almost be a symbolical vision

from the Apocalypse. Apollonius holds the Jews and Judaea in supreme contempt. Titus is, in his eyes, an instrument of Divine wrath, and he refuses to go into a country which is polluted by the crimes and vices of its inhabitants, with whom he could do no good. This leads us to make another observation of a somewhat similar character. In a general way the towns which are known to have been the chief centres of Christianity in the earliest days are either imperfectly noticed, or are said to have been converted by Apollonius. He received his earlier education at Tarsus, Paul's native city, but he left it on account of the corruption of its morals. Ephesus, Antioch, Smyrna, Alexandria, all of them great centres of Christianity, are the objects of a like censure. To him, Ephesus, the head-quarters of Paul, and afterwards of John, owes its salvation. Apollonius did much good there, we are told, but learnt nothing. A Christian, reading his biography, will easily understand the possibility of remaining attached to the old religion without its being necessary to approve of immoral practices, such as the

combats of gladiators, or to believe in such absurd fables as were imagined by the poets. Who knows but that there may be a bright light thrown upon the question of the divinity of Christ in that answer of Apollonius to Domitian, when he is questioning him after the manner of Caiaphas, "Why art thou called God?" To which the philosopher replies, "Because the name of God is the title due to every man who is believed to be virtuous."

We must bear in mind now that at the time when Philostratus wrote, Christianity and the Church had outlived the period during which the brutal outrages of the populace in certain large cities only contrasted with the contemptuous indifference with which they were treated elsewhere. The scornful disdain of a Tacitus or a Pliny was a thing of the past. Celsus had aimed the sharp-pointed weapons of his acute reasoning at the Gospel, Lucian had attacked it with his biting sarcasms. Numbers of the followers of Plato had been baptised. The Christians of Rome and their bishop had been in high favour at the court of Commodus. Many dis-

tinguished martyrs had engaged the public attention by their sufferings, and contemporary historians were beginning to mention, as they related the lives of the emperors, whether they had tolerated or persecuted the Christians. Can it be admitted, then, that Philostratus, at a time like this, when he had to write a work on the religious movement which was affecting the whole world, should never have once thought of Christianity? And if he did think of it, and systematically avoided all mention of the subject, we are forced to infer that his very silence is anything but a sign of indifference. An apparent want of interest in a system which it is the writer's object to destroy is one of the ordinary phases of ancient controversy. The Epistle of James does not say a word about Paul or his school, and yet its aim is most certainly to refute the doctrine of justification by faith as taught by Paul. Another theological work, more like a romance than a treatise on divinity (the Clementine *Homilies*), was certainly prompted by a desire to refute Paul and Marcion, and yet they

are neither of them mentioned by name in the work.

One thing which is undeniably certain is that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were equally mistaken when they pronounced the work of Philostratus to be decidedly and essentially hostile to Christianity. It contains no evidences either of indifference or hostility to Christianity, but rather of jealousy. It is inspired by a desire to turn the advantages and the superiority possessed by Christianity over ordinary Paganism to the profit of a reformed Paganism, and if we consider the following words of the Bishop of Avranches, "Ne quid ethnici Christianis invidere possent" (that the Pagans may have no cause to envy the Christians in anything), apart from the stronger expressions of feeling which accompany them in the passage already quoted, they will be found to express the exact truth. To have indicated with such nicety the true nature of the book and its many varying and changeful shades is one more proof of that character for learning to which Professor Baur of Tubingen is so

justly entitled. It was necessary that Apollonius should be like Christ, but it was also necessary that he should be different from, and superior to, Him. This circumstance alone can explain the various curious phenomena which require explanation, and its reasonableness assumes the form of absolute certainty when we fancy ourselves living in the same political and religious atmosphere as Philostratus when he wrote his book.

Julia Domna was, as everybody knows, the Egeria of that Pagan reform which was more or less skilfully, but at any rate perseveringly, conducted (as such matters are when undertaken by women) by the empresses who were related to her, and who succeeded her in the supreme management of affairs. It would appear, then, that this priestly family, who had come from the Temple of El-Gebal (the god of the mountain or high place), animated by a spirit of religious domination hardly known to the Paganism of the West, hoped to reform Paganism and to establish the supremacy of the Eastern deity, who was none other than the sun, the coarse image

or symbol of which Elagabalus had brought to Rome. It was one of those black stones (probably an aerolite) which had been at all times worshipped in the East as symbols of the stars from which they were supposed to have fallen. Time and space would fail to enumerate the eccentricities which the young emperor perpetrated in serious earnest, in hopes of consolidating the supremacy of the sun-god. The first exercise of his authority consisted in a command that every priest, when sacrificing, should mention his name before that of any other god in the public invocations. He declared him superior to Jupiter. He wished to marry him to the Roman Pallas, and even profaned the much-revered shrine of the goddess by entering into it with his idolatrous priests to remove her statue, with which he intended to do honour to his idol: but fearing that she was of too warlike a nature, and remembering that there was an Astarte of true Phœnician origin at Carthage, he sent for her. The whole of Italy was to rejoice at the celebration of these splendid nuptials. He himself was

guilty of a most scandalous outrage against public morality, marrying, as he did on that occasion, a vestal, having informed the senate of his intention, and explained to them that it was lawful for a priest to marry a priestess. He invited over a number of Phœnician women, and danced with them publicly before the sacred stone which he had set up to be worshipped by the universe. Unhappily the symbols of this worship were revoltingly indecent, and, in fact, some of the almost incredible details which are recorded of the private life of Elagabalus may be attributed to the ignorance that prevailed respecting the symbolical character of the rites he practised. It may be remembered, too, by the way, that his mother, Soemis, and his grandmother, Maesa, joined in the same form of worship. Herodianus, however, informs us that Maesa would willingly have checked this feverish and bigoted zeal for sun-worship, which she easily foresaw would expose the foolish young emperor to ridicule and endanger his position on the throne; and as nothing is said of Soemis, we may fairly presume

that if she had not been the first to inoculate her son with that fanatical infatuation for the god of his fathers, she at all events participated in it then. This opinion is strengthened when we find that she eventually became as unpopular as her son, and was put to death at the same time. We must not, however, dwell too much upon this caricature of a religious conception, which, after all, was not wholly without some redeeming features of greatness. By his fanaticism Elagabalus destroyed the idea which lies at the very foundation of the biography of Apollonius by Philostratus. That idea was, that Greco-Roman Paganism needed reform, and that, without throwing its principles entirely overboard, its legends might be modified, and its nature altered into a kind of monotheism in which the sun would occupy the first place and be worshipped as the source of physical as well as moral light, and so embrace in one and the same worship the most beautiful and the most popular divinities of ancient Paganism, such as Apollo, Æsculapius, Esmoun, Melkart, Mithras, and many other heroes

of a solar type. The address "Soli invicto" would thus have become the universal prayer.

Hence the worship of one god under different names, and the pre-eminence of virtue amongst the elements of religious life, is the foundation on which this theology rests; its toleration is evident, and its nature such that it might easily have viewed Christianity as an approximation—a distant one, perhaps, but still an endurable approximation—to the ideal conceived by the new Pagan school. There is only a step between this and the comprehensive religious scheme which was fully developed in the reign of Alexander Severus, the young pupil of Julia Mamaea, who, with his mother's consent, placed Christ by the side of Abraham, Orpheus, and Apollonius of Tyana. The only thing is that Christianity seems to be held in higher estimation by Julia Mamaea than by her parents.

There is a tradition extant that Mamaea sent for the great Origen in order that she might hear him speak on religious topics, and certainly by none better than the philosophical theologian could the Christian

doctrines have been explained to the female philosopher who then ruled the empire. It has been maintained that both she and her son secretly embraced the Christian faith, and although this is contradicted by facts, it still remains true that Alexander Severus proved himself, by his conduct, by his words, and by repeated imperial acts, as favourably disposed towards the Christians as a sovereign could be who retained his allegiance to the principles of Paganism.

Hence we see that from the time of Julia Domna to that of Julia Mamaea, the certainty that a reformation of Paganism had become a necessity resulted first in the toleration of the Christian religion; secondly, in a certain degree of respect, mingled in secret with jealousy; and at last it went so far as to allow Christianity an acknowledged position in the broad light of day, by the side of the old traditional religions, such as Judaism and Paganism. One might have imagined that Alexander and his mother were establishing some such connection between Abraham and Jesus Christ as that which existed possibly in their minds between Orpheus,

the poet and revealer of the remotest periods of antiquity, and Apollonius, the modern reformer, the Greek Christ, whose teachings had recently been enlightening the world.

The gospel of Philostratus (for in reality his work may be so termed) did not go sufficiently far for so comprehensive a system of religion. The aristocratic spirit of the Pagan Greek still breathed throughout it, and Julia Domna, who had fostered the writing of the work, was not as yet so well disposed towards the religion which had sprung from the ancient soil of Judaea as her niece, Julia Mamaea, would afterwards become. If the reform she dreamt of was ever realised, Paganism would have its son of God, pure, blameless, devoted to his mission, and adding to his doctrines the weight of influence which a bodily manifestation and a real life alone can give to an ideal theory. Hence this reform must be a positive religion, and not only a system of philosophy. This is why Apollonius, though a great friend of the philosophers, must be superior to them all, even to Socrates. Their rational monotheism,

by dint of a little symbolical interpretation, will be reconciled with the polytheism of the majority. The most absurd of their legends will have to be put aside. Their sacrifices must cease to be distinguished by the shedding of blood and by acts of impurity, and for the future they must represent acts of submission and gratitude to the Deity, the source of all good, not clumsily-contrived means of working upon the Divine will, and propitiating it for the obtainment of gross and selfish objects. The upright intention and the moral character of the worshipper must alone determine the true worth of all religious acts. Now all these conditions were already peculiar to Christianity, but reformed Paganism was to enjoy them too; and further, to possess other advantages which Christianity had not. Jesus was only the offspring of an obscure and contemptible people; His doctrine was but the refinement of a paltry local tradition; His life, of which little was known by the great majority of his contemporaries, was extremely short. He soon fell a victim to the attacks of two or three priests, a petty

king, and a procurator, and a few remarkable prodigies alone distinguished Him from a crowd of other existences which had nothing whatever to do with the destinies of humanity. Apollonius, on the contrary, a Greek by birth, had stored his vast intellect with the religious doctrines of the whole world, from India to Spain; his life extended over a century. Like a luminous meteor he traversed the universe, in constant intercourse with kings and the powerful ones of the earth, who venerate and fear him; and if he ever meets with hostility and opposition, he triumphs over it majestically, always stronger than his tyrants, never subject to humiliations, never brought into contact with public executioners. The most wonderful miracles are performed at every step; and although the partial greatness which was enjoyed for a time by the Jewish Christ cannot be denied, and the partial truth which He taught cannot be gainsayed, and although those who have been driven into His small Church by the abuses of popular Paganism are tolerated, yet it would be absurd to hail Him as the founder of the universal

religion; and it remains an obvious fact that He must play a very secondary part by the side of the glorious and Divine Apollonius. Such was the position which Julia Domna took when she asked Philostratus to write the life of Apollonius. Philostratus may have been less impressed than his royal mistress with the greatness and truth of Christianity, but he scrupulously kept in view the idea she had formed of religious truth—an idea which is perceptible in the lives both of Maesa and Soemis, with a decided bias in favour of Pagan superstition in the case of Soemis, and in favour of Christianity in the case of Maesa, with a clearly-expressed appreciation of its higher character. There are two isolated facts in the lives of Septimius Severus and Caracalla which to all appearance are of trifling importance, but which can only be explained by such a train of thought as we have been describing. These two emperors allowed the Pagans to make Hercules their heir; hence great riches soon accrued to the temples and priests of that popular deity. At the same time, while refusing to persecute the Chris-

tians, Septimius Severus threatened that severe penalties should be inflicted on any Pagan who became a Christian. The law seems to have ended in a threat, but the intention by which it was dictated is evident. On the one hand, it was not thought desirable that Christianity should make any rapid conquests; on the other, all facilities were afforded to the proselytism of a confirmed Pagan worship. And what was that worship? The worship of Hercules, of a sun-god, or rather of many gods under one name, who, as Philostratus informs us, are the liberators, the benefactors, and the enlighteners of mankind.

IV.

What was the result of this attempt to effect a Pagan reformation? A mere nothing. The burden was a heavy one to raise, the arms that tried to raise it were very feeble. The idea that any one could seriously believe it possible that the star of the Christ of the Gospels should pale before the rising of Apollonius of Tyana, serves only now to raise a smile. But even supposing that history could produce

a sufficient number of well-authenticated facts to prove that the worship of this paragon of inspired wisdom had lasted longer than is usually thought by those who look upon his biography as an amusing romance, we cannot admit that the scheme of reform which was incarnated in himself produced any lasting impression upon the intellects or the institutions of the period.

One great stumbling-block was thrown across the path of this work of reformation by the circumstance that the great Pagan philosophers of Alexandria, Porphyry and Iamblichus, who were no friends of Christianity, and who were equally anxious to purify the Paganism of mythology, refused to recognise the reformer introduced to them by Philostratus, although his authority would have been so eminently adapted to confirm their theurgic and ecstatic doctrines. The sentiments of the biographer on the subject of the wisdom of Egypt may have led to this determination of the Alexandrian philosophers. Who knows but that Philostratus acted the part of a wise

courtier to Julia Domna when he censured, as we have seen he did, the philosophy and religion of Egypt? It appears that jokes had been rife in Alexandria respecting the daughter of the priest of Emesa, who had become an empress and a female philosopher. However, we cannot but believe that the real character of the Pagan Christ was sadly metamorphosed as it passed through the hands of Philostratus. Its interest as a channel of instruction having failed, it will be unnecessary to discuss seriously the historical value of the biography. It is more than evident that when people invent, as Philostratus has invented when he speaks of a country to which he thinks none of his readers will follow him, it is very easy to give the reins to one's imagination in a description of events which occurred a century ago. There is one detail especially which indicates a great amount of shameless effrontery, inasmuch as the truth of the matter must have been well known at the court of Septimius Severus—I mean the description which he gives of Babylon, as though the city were still in its full

splendour, whereas it is an established fact that in the first century of our era Babylon was nothing but a gigantic ruin. The individual who is described as the Pagan Christ by Philostratus was not held in any esteem in his own time. Dion Cassius speaks of him as of *one Apollonius of Tyana*, Απολλώνιος τις Τυανεύς, and looks upon him as a mere seer or magician who lived, he says, in the reign of the Emperor Domitian. Lucian does not allude to him in a more respectful tone; in his estimation Apollonius is only a clever comedian. We find him mentioned again by Origen in his work against Celsus. Now Celsus, who attributed the miracles of Jesus to sorcery, had said that the arts of magic could have no influence except upon men who were devoid of all cultivation and morality, and that with philosophers they were powerless. Origen replies to him with the remark that in order to convince himself of the contrary he has only to read the memoirs of Apollonius of Tyana, by Maeragenes, who speaks of him as a philosopher and a magician who exercised his magic repeatedly on philosophers. Mae-

ragenes is one of the writers mentioned by the biographer of Apollonius who lived before his time; but when we bear in mind how persistently the friend of Julia Domna exculpates his hero from the suspicion even of being connected with magic, when we find him complaining that the historians who had preceded him, more especially Maeragenes, had sadly misunderstood the actions and doctrines of Apollonius, when he adopts as almost exclusively his own the anecdotes recorded by Damis (the St. Mark, as it were, of the Pagan gospel) we cannot get rid of the suspicion that the historical reality of Apollonius consists in this, viz., that he was one of those itinerant preachers whose claims upon the public attention were partly absurd and partly real, who were at one and the same time preachers and impostors, and who were a numerous body in the two first centuries. If these preachers obtained any degree of popularity as they went about from place to place, however small it might be, they soon became the nucleus, as it were, of some legendary comet, and as soon dis-

appeared amidst the many-tinted clouds of apocryphal history. Men whose character was so open to suspicion were quite as much exposed to satire as to panegyric. Lucian has described an itinerant prophet of this description in his *Alexander Abonoteichos*, one of his best compositions. Like Apollonius, Alexander is a man of prepossessing exterior and imposing appearance, witty and clever, a zealous disciple of Pythagoras, much devoted to Æsculapius, a great seer, and, moreover, a pupil of the sage of Tyana. But beyond all this he is an infamous impostor who prostitutes his natural advantages to the most shameful ends. The picture may possibly be overdrawn, as all Lucian's pictures were. He is not more personal in the case of Apollonius than he is in that of a confirmed Christian in his *Peregrinus*. He wished to concentrate all the dark sides of such a character in the person of an imaginary individual, but he has succeeded, meanwhile, in giving us a caricature of that same reality which Philostratus has also given us in a more than flattered form. The history of philosophy

also mentions an Anaxilaus of Larissa, an itinerant Pythagorean of the Augustan period, who was not so famous for the extent of his knowledge as for his powers as a magician; he wrote on the art of magic, was quoted by Pliny, and like Apollonius was compelled to quit Italy in consequence of the imperial decree which banished all magicians from the empire. Hence all these wonder-working Pythagoreans have a suspicious mark on their very face. And, consequently, it is quite natural that, notwithstanding the efforts made by Philostratus to idealise a magician who had gained a great reputation in Asia Minor, the Pagan philosophers of Alexandria should have deemed him unfit to occupy the high position into which he was being forced, and that they should have refused to acknowledge him as their ideal of the wise friend of the gods. They chose rather to raise an opposition to the Christ of the Gospel through the instrumentality of some illustrious Pagan whose character would be less open to suspicion, and whose life and conduct were more creditable.

Accordingly we find (and it is another proof of the connecting link which we think we have distinctly traced between the work of Philostratus and the progress of religious thought in the third century) that the same need of an incarnation of truth and holiness in a human life, and the same realisation of the power with which such an incarnation would imbue a religious ideal, are evidenced in the minds of the illustrious Pagans of Alexandria and of the favourite of the Empress Julia. This has been admirably noticed by Dr. Baur. The time was sure to come in the West as it had come many centuries before in the extreme East, with which Philostratus pretended to be familiar, when the old natural religion would struggle to become more moral. How was it that a transformation was taking place which was so completely opposed to its fundamental principle? It was evidently being effected through those liberating and healing gods, Apollo, Æsculapius, and Hercules, all of them sun-gods. Apollo, more especially in Pagan Greece, was the god of moral as well as of physical purification. The

guilty resorted to his sanctuary at Delphi to seek refuge from the avenging Furies. He himself had shown an example of penitent submission when he kept the flocks of Admetus. And consistently with this progress of ideas, there arose a great and mysterious embodiment of ancient wisdom which nearly became the Buddha of the West, and which would probably have remained so to this day, but that the appearance and triumph of Christianity caused the Western world to deviate for ever from its original course: that embodiment of wisdom was Pythagoras. If we are to believe the traditions which relate to him, he had devoted himself specially to the worship of Apollo, and his disciples in more modern times were often disposed to look upon him as the earthly incarnation of the god of light. Pythagoras not only founded a school of philosophy, but he left behind him an organised association of men, a kind of church, whose members, linked together by peculiar doctrines and initiations, sought to bring about political and moral reforms in the countries where their societies were established. There

was something profoundly mystical in his religious doctrine. The universe, according to him, was one grand choir in which the creative numbers vibrated in one eternal harmony. He believed in the transmigration of souls. During the Trojan war, he had been that Euphorbus who is represented in the *Iliad* as so devoted to the service of Apollo. Like Buddha, he had his own way of attaining to perfection, and that way, in opposition to the natural religion of the majority, was through an asceticism which was at enmity with the natural life, and was founded upon purifications, fastings, silence, absolute chastity, and commandments not to touch anything that had been endued with life. Pythagorism was eclipsed both by the brilliant philosophy of Plato and the severe dialectic of Aristotle, and yet it is affirmed by Aristotle that Plato, when advanced in years, returned to the profession of pure Pythagorism, just as in declining life one returns to the religious belief which had been forgotten amidst the illusions and ambitious projects of mature life. At any rate, we know from history that to-

wards the end of the Roman republic and during the period immediately following it, Pythagorism revived with wonderful intensity of vigour. Men of great authority on such subjects (Mr. Zeller amongst others, the learned professor of Marburg) have thought lately that this revival of Pythagorism is the true source of those communities of Egyptian Therapeutae and Essenians from Palestine whose origin is wrapped up in so much obscurity. It is now quite easy to understand why all these more or less real sorcerer-philosophers were, or said they were, Pythagoreans, and hence it is not surprising that Porphyry and Iamblichus, who wished to have a Pagan Christ, should have selected Pythagoras in preference to the suspicious individual presented to their notice by Philostratus in the person of Apollonius. It is a very difficult matter in these days to realise the serious manner in which these two eminent men collected together the tales which were in circulation respecting the philosopher of Samos. What days those must have been when a writer like Porphyry could relate in perfect good

faith that the "river Caucasus," when Pythagoras crossed it, was heard to say, "Welcome Pythagoras!" That Pythagoras converted a voracious bear to habits of moderation, and that he persuaded an ox, by whispering into his ear, never to eat beans again! It is strange that, just as the biography of Apollonius is in a great measure an imitation of the Gospel narrative, so the life of Pythagoras, as it is found written in the work of Porphyry and Iamblichus, is nothing more than a reproduction of the characteristic traits in the life of the hero of Philostratus. Like Apollonius, Pythagoras had made long voyages in order that he might become the receptacle of all earthly wisdom. He had his Domitian in the tyrant Phalaris. He is the son of Apollo just as Apollonius is the son of Proteus. He works countless miracles. He is magician, preacher, moralist, and reformer of political and religious abuses. In a word, it is hard to say whether the Pythagoras of the Alexandrians is not an Apollonius of an earlier date by some centuries, or whether the Apollonius of Julia Domna, besides his

resemblance to Christ, is not a Pythagoras endowed with a second youth. The real truth of the matter will probably be found to lie between the two suggestions.

Why did not Philostratus seek his own ideal in the person of that venerable philosopher whose fame was so great and whose character was so unimpeachable? Probably because he was anxious to leave Christianity no ground of superiority whatever, and because he found, with his royal mistress, that Pythagoras was too old, too far removed from the events, the institutions, and the ideas of the period. The imperial policy and Pythagoras were inconsistent with each other and could not co-exist. He chose, therefore, to bring another Pythagoras to life in a form which was calculated to fall in with the views of the times in which he wrote. The powerlessness of the Alexandrians to resuscitate their own revered patron shows that on this point at least Philostratus and Julia Domna had been very clear-sighted, whilst their own powerlessness to gain belief in their transformed magician proves that they attempted an impossibility. The re-

sult was simply this, that if the Paganism of the third century attempted to find its own Christ, that Christ was never found.

There are few periods more fertile in useful and profitable lessons for the student of the philosophy and history of religion. We have seen the principle established that a religious doctrine, recently introduced, unfavourably viewed by the aristocracy, the people, the students of philosophy, and the great majority, can gain such an influence over its all-powerful enemies that almost against their will and unawares they are compelled to make the greatest of concessions—viz., that of seeking how they shall be able to make it appear to conform to the old traditional creeds which they are still anxious to retain. Christianity had already gained such an ascendency by virtue of its moral superiority that the most intelligent champions of ancient Paganism felt the absolute necessity of moralising their own system—in other words, of Christianising their religion in order to enable it to compete with its younger rival. But what a thankless task! What influence could the finest

discourses of Pagan morality produce by the side of the orgies of Bacchus and the rites of Cybele, or in the face of the smiles of the Venus Pandemos and the indescribable forms under which Mercury was represented in the open streets? Such a mixture of severity of morals and shamelessness in religious rites would inevitably produce in the minds of the people of that time the same effect that was produced in our own time, when by some strange convulsion the restored theocracy of the Middle Ages was transformed but a few years since into the guardian of our civilisation and our social progress, and the revival of the Inquisition became the palladium of our modern liberties. A religious movement, however strong it may be apparently, must in reality be very weak when it is compelled to borrow the language and to copy the external forms of its opponents.

At the same time, it is easy to see how right modern critics are when they maintain that, as a general rule in ancient times, and more particularly in the three first centuries, the true meaning of his-

toric truth, and of that which naturally depends upon it—viz., literary authenticity—was but little understood. Much abuse has been needlessly lavished upon modern criticism because the same principle has been applied to several of the canonical books. And yet we must yield to evidence. All classes in those days, both Pagans and philosophers, orthodox Christians and Christians tainted with heresy, were guilty on a large scale, and without any scruples of conscience, of that offence which was afterwards to be named by the euphuism of "pious fraud," but which, at the time we speak of, was so openly practised that we have not the heart to apply to it so offensive a name. When Philostratus drew an almost entirely imaginary picture of the character who was to stand as the ideal man of the traditional religion—when Porphyry and Iamblichus made up a legendary Pythagoras, can we say that they were impostors and men who were actuated by sinister or criminal motives? If we read their writings carefully, we shall be convinced of the contrary. With all deference, then,

to the critics, we say that these men could have had no other motive than the one they avowed openly—viz., the moral and religious reform of their contemporaries. And as regards the manner in which they did their work, they would certainly never have thought of excusing themselves on the grounds which were afterwards reduced to the formula that "the end justifies the means," for the means which they employed did not seem to them to need any justification whatever. In our own sensitiveness on this point, in the severity of our judgments when a literary fraud is exposed, in our want of confidence in the general testimony of history, we may trace one of the results of our Christian training. It is one of the fruits of that passionate love of truth, and consequently of reality, which Christianity has communicated to the mind of man. Beyond the pale of the Christian world it is nowhere found in the same degree. To it may be attributed much of our intolerance, but be it remembered that on it our science is founded. That "spirit of truth" which is the result of fearless inquiry, and

to which we often owe our agonies of doubt and our moments of disappointment, is nevertheless far too beautiful and far too noble an acquisition to allow of any regret for the advantages we may seem to have lost. This is the price which we have had to pay for the illimitable progress of humanity in knowledge and in power. If we understand the Gospel rightly we shall find that it has taught us more than a knowledge of certain great and vital truths; it has created in us a thirst for truth itself, and it is with truth as it is with righteousness, the blessed are not those who think they possess it, but who are continually hungering and thirsting after it.

The brief summary we have now given of the state of religious inquiry as it fermented in men's minds in the third century of our era shows us how many causes there were which combined to prepare the way for the ultimate triumph of Christianity in the reign of Constantine. In fact, the atmosphere which all thinkers breathed was full of Christian notions, even before many of them deigned to do

Christianity the honour of studying its doctrines with any degree of serious attention. What a light these strivings after a Pagan reform in the third century throw upon the great effort made by Julian in the fourth! It should be noticed here that this romantic Caesar only revived the schemes of Julia Domna, Philostratus, and the Alexandrians with a little more show of ill-will to Christianity—that is to say, that he tried to introduce some of the Christian vitality into the dried-up veins of the old corpse he wished to revive, and once more it was the sun, the venerable Helios, that was presented as a symbol and as a reality to the worshipful homage of the civilised world.

How paltry the results when compared with the vastness of the undertaking! What would have been the fate of our Western world if Christianity had not baptised it with a new spirit and animated it with a new life? Let us ask ourselves the question, and I think we can solve it without presumption by the following alternative: either the condition of barbarism would have been irremediable

and the brilliant Greco-Roman civilisation would have had no successor, or after a time, thanks to municipal institutions, and when the waters of destruction had found their level, a certain form of social order, a coarse copy of the society of the ancients, would have been gradually established. In the latter case it is easy to foresee to what a height of civilisation we should have attained. China is there to give us an idea of it. Hollow forms which only serve to hide, and that faintly, a state of barbarism in social habits, a hopeless want of moral vigour and taste for the infinite, a certain barrenness and incorrigible shallowness of mind, the grossest superstitions joined to the most listless indifference to religious and scientific truth—such would have been our condition. It is quite possible that under such circumstances the recollection of a human being indistinctly known by the name of Pythagoras would have floated in our memories as the Buddha of the West. We should have had our Mussulmans brought by the invasion of the Arabs, but no change would have

taken place. Respect for the past and superstition would have ruled supreme amongst us, just as we see them still when decay begins its work of destruction in the social body, and men do not think that it is even possible to amend the present. I may be mistaken, but when I look at Apollonius the sage, with his everlasting maxims, the foolish Damis, and Philostratus the rhetorician, and all those emperors and empresses who, in the quietness of their domestic circles, decide how the world is to be restored to virtue—when I look at all those councils of women, and men of letters, and others well versed in the ritualisms of the age, I seem to have before me a picture of Chinese life with all its most characteristic traits. They wish to appear as though they were in earnest, they wish to look imposing, but they are simply absurd. They determine upon the regeneration of the world, and an Elagabalus tries to carry it out. Great show is made of vast learning and profound acquaintance with science, and the Caucasus is mentioned as a river when it is not thought to be a mountain by which

India is separated from Persia. All this looks like mandarin science and mandarin religion: the only thing wanting is the decoration of the red or yellow button, and the Son of Heaven is there to bestow it. How pleasant it is to think that at the very time when this old comedy was being played out, the Gospel of freedom, of more intimate communion with God, of progress through holiness, truth, and charity, was already telling upon these grown-up children who were in the midst of their games playing at making gods, and that the feeble and aimless questionings of these outstripped apostles of conservatism were being answered by the fresh, clear voice which, rejoicing in the full vigour of its youth, and resting upon the immovable foundation of infinite love, proclaimed both to the individual and to society at large the sacred duty of a never-ending reform!

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